

Newport, R. I.

July 20. 1890

My darling Helen:

I am going to write to you on a subject which may seem somewhat strange, particularly at your present age; but it is one upon which you are sure to hear, probably already have heard, a good deal of light senseless talk. Nonsense is not always a bad thing; but it is a bad thing, a great misfortune, when correct and serious ideas are never even so much as named, in connection with a matter of the utmost importance; when false

and ruinous views pass current as true and reasonable. I am going to write to you about marriage.

It is often said that marriage is the most important incident in a woman's life; and yet, in the same breath almost, it will be asserted that ~~latterly~~ marriage is a lottery. What a desperate view of life is this! that its most important event is to be decided by chance. But, on the other hand, what a faithless, what a wicked thing for a Christian to say; only to be excused on the ground of a thoughtlessness almost as culpable as unbelief. Can the same person believe that God will hear and answer prayer, and at the same time

believe that He will not overrule and provide the marriage most
suitable, to those who ask His guidance. Here, however, is the real
root of the evil. Most of those who call themselves Christians form
their plans and their opinions of life, and pass on from day to day,
without asking God's guidance; and they are governed in their views
of marriage by the views of the world, by the light foolish re-
marks of those with whom they associate. Money, good looks,
a dozen other qualities desirable enough in themselves, are thrust
upon as the serious reasons for entering upon so serious a
step. You will even ^{hear} some say that a man who leaves them
alone, to go their own way, is the husband they would have -
a married life apart from one another. Truly, when one hears
such absurdities, one begins to see why, in the Bible, Folly
and Wickedness are used as synonymous.

In our sense, my dear child, you are now young to
think about marriage; I hope several ripening years, of
growth in grace and wisdom, may pass over your head
before that time comes to you. But you have reached the
age when, whether I like it or not, you will be hearing
and talking and thinking about this and such things. Now
let me say to you: "Be not a child in understanding, in evil
be a child, but in understanding a woman." Since marriage
and relations with men must needs be in your thoughts,

let all your thoughts in such matters
 be referred to God. Put yourself under
 His care. Doubt, if you can avoid it,
 think a purpose yourself about your
 future; but do not be ashamed, at
 your early age, to ask Him that this
 may be His care. Ask Him that if
 He wills you to marry He may guide
 you to the man whose care He will
 entrust you, and whose happiness
 and home it may be your privi-
 lege to make. To be dwelling on
 and worrying to marriage continually
 is morbid; but to be daily commending
 yourself to Him is but prudent; for,

if you do not thus seek His protec-
tion, the momentous decision may
come upon you unawares, and you
may add another to the long list of
unhappy souls, of whom it is written:
"So, this is one who took not God
for his strength, but trusted in him-
self."

And so also be careful as to opinions
you may form. "Prove all things;
hold fast that which is good." I have
not set out to frame a set of opinions
for you, and I shall not advance any
here. My one thought now is to induce
you now to begin and take a Christian
view of marriage, which "is not to be

entered with unadvisedly or lightly; but soberly, reverently,
advisedly discreetly and in the fear of God" To think that,
with these words of the marriage service before them, they
should be communicants, found who enter on that holy state
without even asking God's guidance, and for low motives of
mere money, or the attraction of love which regards not God's
will. Truly to such, marriage is a lottery, and worse than
a lottery. Were not God's mercy for us, our short marriages
marriage for most would be a lottery without prizes

If you thus commend your future to God, He will
surely direct it. You may not find all the happiness
you would have, but you will have kept the course
which shall bring you, up and upon also, peace at the end
If you are to marry hereafter, the happiness of your future home
the well being of your husband and children, may depend
upon the prayers you are saying, and the thoughts you
are thinking now.

July 21st We shall be looking eagerly for your return, my dear child,
for your absence already begins to seem long. You will find a very pleasant
home and surroundings here, though a very little Society of Friends - but after so
much fun you will be able to subsist for a while. Your mother sends you
much love. I am sorry I write you only solemn letters, but I am very
busy trying to get on with my work in hand. Your affectionate father A.D.W.

on marriage

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Miss Helen E. Mahan

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